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ABSTRACT

One aspect of a survey conducted in 1980 by the Coast Community College District (CCCD) focused on the educational interests and plans of CCCD residents. Specifically, the survey sought to determine the extent of community interest in college-level education, the extent to which respondents viewed CCCD as the best place to meet their educational needs, the nature of the community's educational interests, and the reasons people planned or did not plan to attend classes. Additionally, the study sought to determine the specific educational fields of interest to the community and the relationship between demographic characteristics and educational plans. Study findings, based on telephone interviews with 543 residents, included the following: (1) 47% of the respondents planned to take classes in the near future; (2) 86% of those currently enrolled in college planned to take additional courses, as did 42% of those not currently enrolled; (3) of those planning to attend college, 84% indicated a preference for CCCD schools; (4) 47% of those planning to take courses would do so for personal enjoyment, 25% for occupational training, and 24% to obtain a degree; (5) age, educational level, time since last schooling, household income, and CCCD status were found to be significantly related to educational interest; and (6) the most popular fields of study for personal enjoyment were visual and performing arts, while business and management courses were popular among those seeking a degree or occupational training. (HB)

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COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community Telephone Survey

1980

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY:

**An Examination of the
Educational Interests and Future
Educational Plans of the Community.**

Dennis G. Butler
Associate Dean, District Research

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The Coast Community Colleges, 1370 Adams Avenue, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

This is the sixth in a series of eight reports based on the findings from the 1980 Community Telephone Survey. The focus of this report is on the educational interests and future plans of the survey respondents.

The relationships displayed in this report are primarily those which emerged from the data analysis as being statistically significant. As with other reports from this series, the information presented in this document is intended to serve a wide audience. The data are presented in simplified tables or graphs using whole percentages.

Dennis G. Butler
Coast Community College District
May, 1981

The District wishes to commend the fine efforts of Dr. Dennis G. Butler in guiding the telephone survey through its design, implementation, analysis, and in providing a format which makes the publication highly useable to a diverse audience. As of publication, Dr. Butler is no longer with the Office of Vocational Education and Educational Planning but is teaching at Orange Coast College. Readers who are interested in more detailed statistical factors or analyses which may not be presented in the published report are invited to contact Dr. Butler at Orange Coast College or the District Office of Vocational Education and Educational Planning at 1370 Adams Avenue, Costa Mesa, California 92626, (714) 556-5528.

Donald F. Averill
Coast Community College District
November, 1981

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INTRODUCTION

One important objective of the 1980 Community Telephone Survey was to study the educational interests and future educational plans of the residents of the Coast Community College District. The Coast District has long enjoyed a high level of participation in its classes from members of the community. Previous reports from the Community Survey documented the fact that 47% of the respondents had either attended one of the Coast Colleges in the past or were currently attending. The Community Survey provided an opportunity to find out directly from the community the extent of their educational interests and what they perceive as their future educational needs.

One of the most fundamental tasks for this aspect of the survey was to determine the extent of community interest in college-level education. How many people in the community, at any given time, have a strong enough interest in education that they plan to take classes in the immediate or near future? Given a measure of the educational interest within the community, another

task was to determine what proportion of those people viewed one of the Coast Community Colleges as the best place to meet their needs. A very important aspect of the survey sought to determine the nature of the community's educational needs or the reasons why people planned to attend classes. Additionally, the survey sought to determine the specific educational fields which **were** of interest. During the analysis of the survey data on educational interests, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were studied in order to determine the extent to which different kinds of people have different educational needs.

The following pages provide a broad look at the educational interests of the residents of the Coast Community College District. The information contained in this document represents the major findings from the analysis and the data are, necessarily, presented in summary form. Those readers who are interested in more detailed analyses of the information from this report are invited to contact the District Research Office.

EDUCATIONAL PLANS

In order to learn something about the educational plans and purposes of the residents of the Coast Community College District, certain questions from the Community Telephone Survey were directed at, first, obtaining an indication of what proportion of the community residents had a need or interest in taking college-level classes in the near future; secondly, what type of institution they were planning to attend in order to satisfy their educational purposes; and, finally, the nature of their purposes for attending college classes. Table 1 provides an overall indication of the extent of interest in college classes among the residents of the Coast Community College District.

Table 1
Intent To Take College Classes
In Immediate or Near Future

Intent	# of Respon- dents	Percent
Planning to Attend	257	47%
Not Planning to Attend	215	39
Undecided	74	14

Table 1 shows that nearly half of the respondents (47%) indicated that they intended to take some type of college-

level course in the immediate or near future. This was remarkably close to the proportion of respondents (48%) who had previously taken courses at one of the Coast Colleges or were currently enrolled. This finding serves as a further indication of the very high level of interest in education among the residents of the Coast Community College District.

Table 2 provides some additional insight by displaying the intent to take classes in the immediate or near future by those respondents who were taking classes at the time the survey was conducted versus those who were not.

Table 2
Intent To Take College Classes
By Current Enrollment Status

Intent	Currently Taking Classes	Not Taking Classes
Planning to Attend	86%	42%
Not Planning to Attend	6	44
Undecided	8	14

The information from Table 2 makes the strong suggestion that current enrollment in a college class is highly related to the intent to take college classes in the near future. Those respondents who were enrolled in college classes at the time the survey was conducted were more than twice as likely as respondents not taking classes to report that they planned to attend classes in the immediate or near future. However, it is encouraging to note that at least two out of every five respondents not taking classes at the time of the survey indicated that they also intended to enroll in the immediate or near future.

Institutional Choices

Knowing that a sizeable portion of the community has sufficient interest in additional education to indicate that they plan to enroll in classes leads to the question of what kinds of institutions would be impacted should these potential course takers actually enroll. Table 3 provides an indication of the types of institutions that the potential course takers see as meeting their needs.

Table 3
Institutional Choices of
Potential Course Takers

	# of Respondents	Percent
Coast Colleges	213	84%
Other Community Colleges	3	1
University or 4-Year College	11	4
Private Vocational	6	2
Uncertain	22	9

Table 3 shows that nearly five out of every six potential course takers living in the Coast District plan to enroll at one of the Coast Community Colleges. Relatively few people, less than 5%, indicated that they planned to enroll at a four-year college or university. The findings

displayed in Table 3 indicate that the residents of our community, at least those who are interested in further education, view the Coast Community Colleges as the institutions that are best able to meet their needs.

Table 4
College Choices of
Potential Coast Students

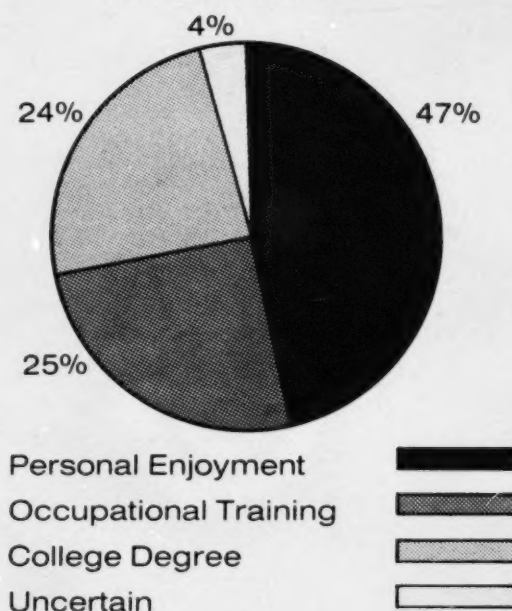
	# of Respon- dents	Percent
Orange Coast	82	39%
Golden West	77	36
Coastline	26	12
Orange Coast and Coastline	3	1
Golden West and Coastline	8	4
Orange Coast and Golden West	13	6
All Three	4	2

Table 4 displays the college choices of the 213 potential course takers who indicated that they planned to take courses at one or more of the Coast Colleges. It is interesting to note that 13% of this group planned to enroll at more than one college.

Educational Purpose

Those respondents who indicated that they planned to enroll in college courses in the immediate or near future were asked if their main purpose for taking a class would be for "personal enjoyment," "occupational training," or "work toward a degree." The distribution of responses to that question is displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Educational Purpose of Potential
Course Takers



About one-fourth of the respondents were planning to pursue a college degree and one-fourth were interested in occupational training. The most notable aspect of the information from Figure 1 is that nearly half of all the people who planned to take classes indicated that they intended to do so for reasons of personal enjoyment. This finding provides substantial testimony to the validity of the community college concept.

Instructional Setting

Respondents who were planning to enroll in courses in the immediate or near future were asked if they would prefer taking classes "on a college campus," "at an off-campus learning center," or "via television." The majority of people (66%) indicated they would prefer taking classes on-campus while 21% had no preference or were uncertain. Off-campus learning centers and television courses were preferred by 9% and 4% respectively. Further analyses involving these data revealed that preference for instructional setting was significantly related to certain characteristics of the respondents. Preference for on-campus courses decreased and interest in off-campus learning centers increased with the age of the respondent. Respondents who had been away from formal schooling for longer periods of time exhibited greater uncertainty and less preference for on-campus instruction. Respondents who had already completed some college-level education, particularly those with baccalaureate degrees, exhibited the strongest preference for off-campus learning centers.

Reasons for Not Taking Classes

Just as it is important to examine the educational purposes and preferences of people who do plan to take college courses, it can also be informative to learn the reasons why people would not take courses. Those respondents who were not planning to take college courses in the immediate or near future were asked if there were any particular reasons why.

The most frequent reason given (39%) for not taking classes was a lack of time. About one out of every six people in this group specifically cited time problems due to family obligations such as small children, while more than one-fourth of this group indicated that their lack of time was due to work conflicts. The rest of these people, more than half, simply reported that they had no time for school. In order to interest these people in taking classes, they would have to be convinced that time devoted to the pursuit of education is not time "spent," but rather it is an accumulation of quality time, the sum of which will add to their enjoyment of life.

The second most frequent reason (19%) for not taking courses was that respondents felt that they already had sufficient education. Responses in this category ranged from people who had multiple graduate degrees to the wag who insisted that he was "already as smart as I can get." Other prominent reasons for not taking classes were lack of transportation, leaving the area, and unfortunately a large group (10%) who felt that they were simply "too old." There were relatively few (3%) who indicated that health problems or a physical disability would prevent them from taking classes. Several people indicated a frank lack of interest and few stated that they felt school was a "waste of time." About 10% of the people were somewhat indefinite about their reasons, including one person who said he had a reason but would not comment on it.

EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

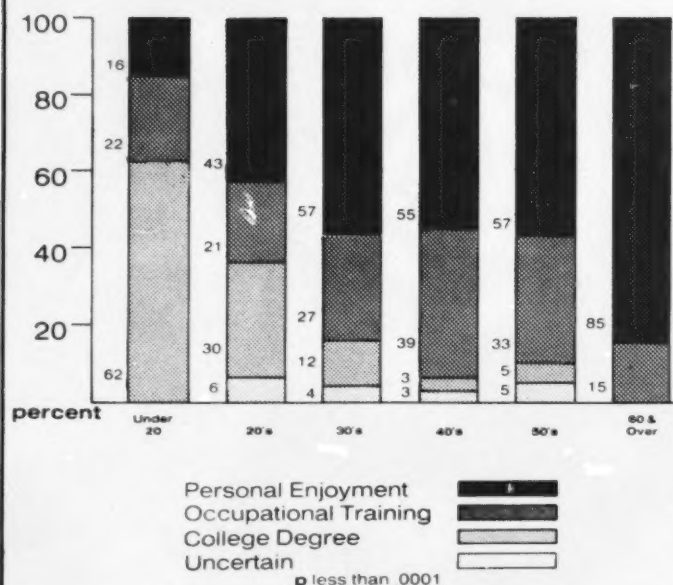
As described earlier in this report, the survey revealed that nearly half of the people planning to take college courses in the immediate or near future intended to do so for reasons of personal enjoyment, while one-fourth planned to pursue a degree and the remaining one-fourth were interested in occupational training. Given the fact that people take courses for different reasons, it follows that these different purposes might reflect certain distinctions between the educational needs of different kinds of people. In order to explore this possibility, the educational purposes or reasons for taking classes were examined in relationship to the eleven demographic variables collected during the survey.

Five of the demographic characteristics emerged from the data analysis as

significantly related to educational purpose. These characteristics were age, previous level of education, time since last formal schooling, income, and previous experience with the Coast Community Colleges. These relationships are displayed on the following pages. Prior to reviewing these relationships, the reader is reminded that the analysis of demographic characteristics also revealed that the reason for taking college courses was **not** related to geographic area of the District, gender, ethnicity, the period of residence in Orange County, the type of residence or the number of people living in the household. Thus, in future planning, no assumptions can be made about the gender, ethnicity, etc. of people who come to the college for a particular purpose.

Age

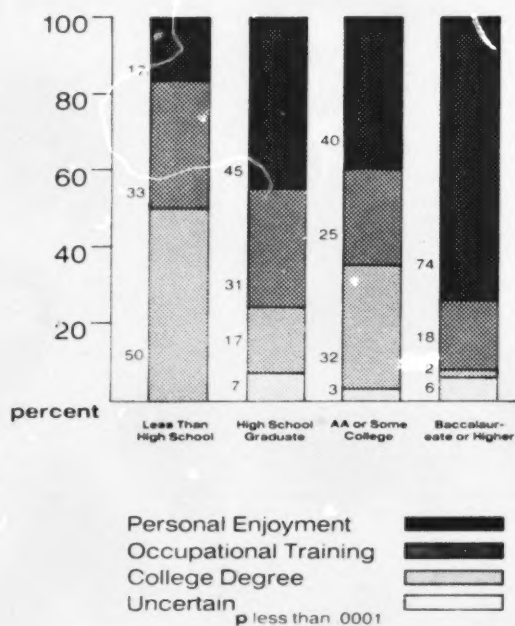
Figure 2
Educational Purpose
By Age Group



As expected, people age sixty and over were interested in taking classes primarily for reasons of personal enjoyment. Surprisingly, 15% of the sixty and over group planned to take classes for the purpose of occupational training. Personal enjoyment was the objective for the majority of people in their thirties, forties, and fifties along with occupational training as the purpose for a sizeable proportion of these three groups. Among the people in their twenties and under age twenty, pursuit of a college degree outweighed occupational training as a reason for taking classes. The under age twenty group differed considerably from all the others with more than 60% interested in a degree and very few planning to take classes for personal enjoyment.

Education Level

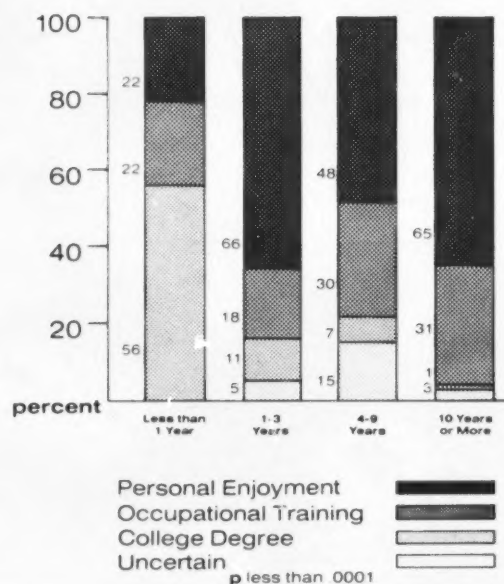
Figure 3
Educational Purpose
By Education Level



Three-fourths of the people with a baccalaureate degree were interested in taking classes for reasons of personal enjoyment while a surprising 18% planned to take courses for occupational training. People with an AA degree or some college experience were primarily interested in degree-oriented courses and personal enjoyment, with one out of four people interested in occupational training. Among the high school graduates, personal enjoyment and occupational training were the primary objectives with only 17% interested in obtaining a degree. Those people with less than a high school diploma showed the greatest interest in obtaining a college degree and also had the highest proportion of people interested in occupational training. Very few people from this group planned to take courses for personal enjoyment.

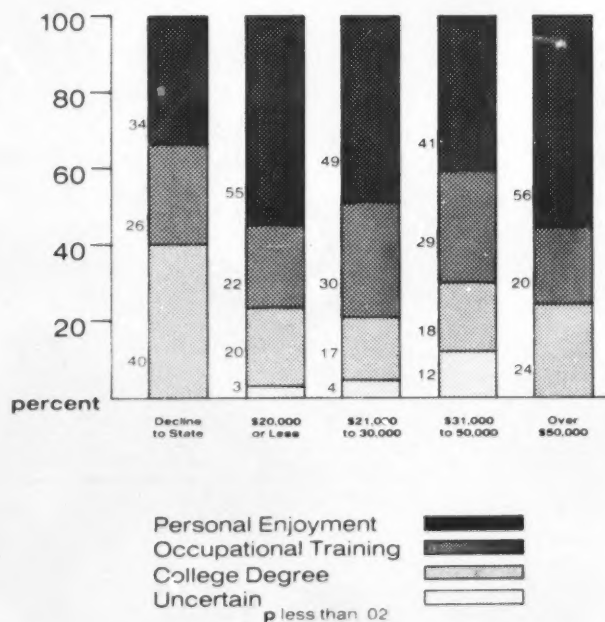
Time Since Last Schooling

Figure 4
Educational Purpose By Time Since Schooling Completed



By far, the highest level of interest in obtaining a college degree was evident among those people who were still in school or who had been away for less than one year. About two-thirds of those who had been away from school for one to three years planned to take classes for personal enjoyment while less than 20% were interested in occupational training. Occupational training was a much more prominent motive for the four to nine year group. This group was also characterized by a substantial proportion of people who were uncertain about their motives for taking classes. Among the people who had been away from school for ten years or more, nearly one-third were interested in occupational training and nearly two-thirds planned to take classes for reasons of personal enjoyment.

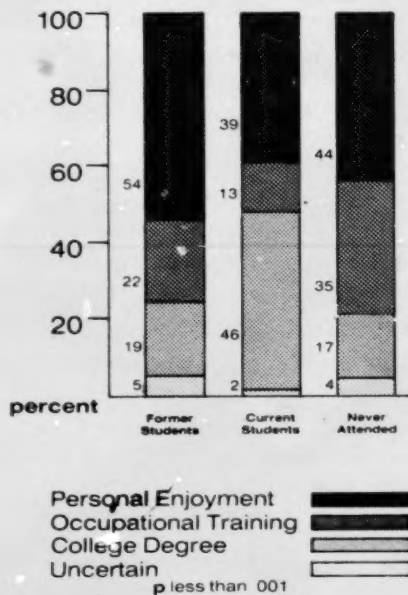
Household Income
Figure 5
Educational Purpose By Income Level



Among those respondents who refused to provide an indication of their income, the motives for taking classes were substantially different from the other income groups. Two out of every five people in the "decline to state" group planned to pursue a college degree while only one-third planned to take courses for reasons of personal enjoyment. Those with incomes of less than \$21,000 and those with incomes over \$50,000 had remarkably similar reasons for taking classes. Occupational training as a motive for taking classes was most prominent among those with incomes ranging from \$21,000 to \$50,000 per year. More than 10% of those in the \$31,000 to \$50,000 range were uncertain as to their reasons for taking classes. Surprisingly, nearly half of those in the highest income group indicated that they planned to take classes for occupational training or in pursuit of a degree.

Coast Student Status

Figure 6
Educational Purpose
By Coast Student Status



The majority of former Coast District students who were planning to take classes in the near future indicated that they would do so for reasons of personal enjoyment. About one in every five former students planned to pursue a degree and a similar proportion was interested in occupational training. Obtaining a college degree as a motive for taking classes was clearly the most prominent among the current students at the Coast Colleges. Nearly 40% of the current students indicated that personal enjoyment was their purpose while, surprisingly, only about one in eight indicated occupational training was their purpose. The greatest interest in occupational training was shown by those who had never attended one of the Coast Colleges. A sizeable proportion of this group also planned to take classes for personal enjoyment.

POPULAR FIELDS OF STUDY

In addition to people's general educational plans and purposes, the Community Survey attempted to gather more specific information, in terms of field of study, about the particular educational needs or interests of those who planned to take classes in the immediate or near future. Knowing which fields of study are of greatest interest to those people with a particular educational purpose can provide considerable insight for future curricular planning. For example, if Fine Arts is a popular field for personal enjoyment course takers but not popular among degree seekers, the curriculum might differ dramatically from what it would be if the preferences were

reversed. Similarly, if a particular field of study is highly popular among those seeking occupational training and also among the personal enjoyment course takers, the curriculum might be developed in several directions simultaneously.

The following tables list the most popular fields of study for each of the three categories of educational purpose used in this study. For purposes of this report, a "popular" field of study was defined as one which was selected by at least 5% of the respondents identified with a particular category of educational purpose.

Personal Enjoyment

Table 5 displays the most popular fields of study for the personal enjoyment course takers. It should be noted that the three most popular fields of study (Visual and Performing Arts, Recreational Activities, and Business and Management) account for more than half of all the potential personal enjoyment course takers. Two of the most popular fields in this category, Business and Management and Precision Production (metal working, woodworking, welding, etc.) are generally thought of as primarily providing occupational training.

Table 5
Popular Fields of Study
Personal Enjoyment Course Takers

Field	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Visual and Performing Arts	27%	27%
Recreational Activities	16	43
Business and Management	12	55
Home Economics	8	63
Foreign Languages	6	69
Precision Production	5	74

Occupational Training

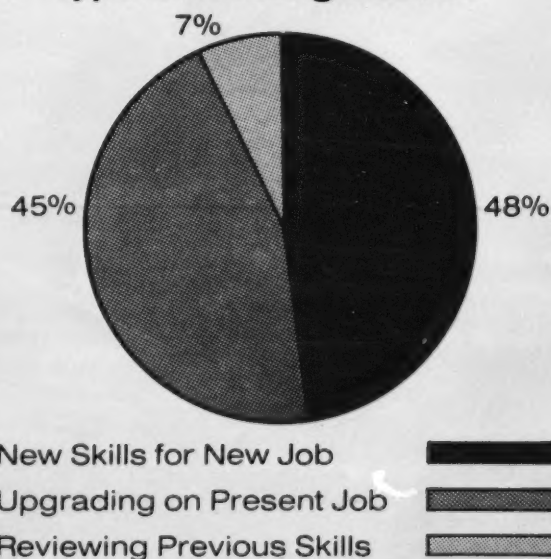
The most popular fields of study for those seeking occupational training are displayed in Table 6. As with the personal enjoyment course takers, the three most popular fields of study account for more than half the people in this group. Fully one-third of those seeking occupational training planned to take courses in the area of Business and Management.

Table 6
Popular Fields of Study
Occupational Training
Course Takers

Field	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Business and Management	33%	33%
Engineering-related Technologies	12	45
Health Sciences	10	55
Precision Production	7	62
Business and Office	7	69
Occupational Home Economics	5	74

In addition to the particular field of study they were interested in, the people who were seeking occupational training were asked to indicate what type of training would be most helpful to them. The distribution of responses is summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Occupational Course Takers
Type of Training Desired



It can be seen from Figure 7 that nearly half of the occupational course takers were interested in learning new skills which would enable them to enter a new occupation while 45% were interested in learning additional skills which would help them move up on their present job. Relatively few people were interested in reviewing skills which had been learned previously.

College Degree

The most popular fields of study for those who were interested in pursuing a college degree are displayed in Table 7. As with the occupational training course takers, the Business and Management field heads the list, accounting for more than one-third of the degree seekers. Visual and Performing Arts occupies a place of strong preference among the degree seekers as it also does for those whose purpose is purely personal enjoyment. People seeking a college degree were the only group to express substantial interest in the Liberal Arts or Education fields.

Table 7
Popular Fields of Study
College Degree Course Takers

Field	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Business and Management	34%	34%
Health Sciences	17	51
Visual and Performing Arts	8	59
Liberal Arts	8	67
Education	6	73
Engineering-related Technologies	6	79
Psychology	6	85

Those people interested in pursuing a degree were also asked what kind of degree they would be working toward. Their response by level of degree is summarized in Figure 8.

Figure 8
Degree Objectives of College Degree Seekers



Associate in Arts Degree 
Baccalaureate Degree 
Graduate Degree 

A substantial majority of those people interested in pursuing a college degree indicated that they planned to obtain an AA degree. More than one-fourth of the people in this group would be working toward a bachelor's degree and about one out of every seven planned to pursue some type of graduate degree. Further analysis of respondents interested in a college degree revealed that nearly all of these people were under age forty and that the vast majority of those interested in an AA degree were under age thirty.

IN SUMMARY

The Community Survey provided us with considerable information about the educational interests and future educational plans of the residents of the Coast Community College District. Our community can be characterized as one in which education is an important part of the social fabric. A large proportion of our respondents, nearly half, indicated they planned to take college courses in the immediate or near future. The vast majority of these people intended to enroll at one of the Coast Community Colleges.

We learned that people who were already taking classes were much more likely to want to take classes in the future. Perhaps the many flavors of education become addictive. While many people planned to enroll for purposes of occupational training or to pursue a degree, nearly half planned to take courses purely for their own personal enjoyment. We also learned that the reasons for taking classes were related to certain individual characteristics. Such

factors as age, previous level of education and income had some influence on whether people planned to pursue a degree, obtain occupational training, or attend for their own enjoyment.

We learned that certain fields of study have a high degree of appeal for those who plan to attend for a given purpose. While the most popular fields of study vary, depending on whether the purpose is personal enjoyment, occupational training or a degree, a few fields such as Business and Management, Health Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts are highly popular for more than one educational purpose.

Members of the community have graciously shared with us their perceptions of their own educational needs and the avenues through which they plan to meet those needs. It is hoped that we will be able to use this information to better help them along their way.

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